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TELEGRAM

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 04819 031640Z

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S E C R E T SAIGON 4819

LIMDIS

SUBJECT: AMERICAN OBSERVERS IN VIETNAM

1. OBSERVERS DISPERSED AS FOLLOWS TO OBSERVE BALLOTING: GUE: HUGHES, MCCALL, ANTELL, JAMES, MUNROE, KNIGHT, PATTERSON AND ELSON: CAN THO: SULLIVAN, SMITH, GULLANDER, BARR AND MCKELDIN: BAN ME THUOT: SCERRA: TUY HOA: GUY AND MURPHY: SAIGON: HICKENLOOPER, LUCEY, MCGANNON, RUDIN, YOUNG AND MUSKIE. HUE, CAN THO AND SAIGON GROUPS (WITH EXCEPTION OF MUSKIE WHO TOURED SAIGON-GIA DINH ON HIS OWN) PARTICIPATED IN GVN SCHEDULE ARRANGED FOR ALL FOREIGN OBSERVERS FOR ELECTION DAY. ARRANGEMENTS FOR OTHER

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PAGE 2 RUMJIR 4819 S E C R E T
GROUPS WERE MADE BY THE MISSION INCLUDING THOSE FOR THE THREE ELECTION EXPERTS: SCAMMON, HERZBERG AND PENNIMAN WHO VISITED TAY NINH, LONG XUYEN AND POLLING PLACES IN SAIGON AREA.

2. INITIAL INDICATIONS ARE THAT ALL TRIPS WORKED OUT WELL AND THAT OBSERVERS WERE GENERALLY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED. THE NINE OBSERVERS WHO VISITED HUE WENT TO FOUR VOTING LOCATIONS OF THEIR OWN CHOICE. THEY REMARKED THAT SIZE

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Department of State TELEGRAM

PAGE 02 SAIGON 04819 031640Z

OF TURNOUT, EFFECTIVE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS, AND SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH BOTH ELECTORAL OFFICIALS AND VOTERS REGARDED WHOLE PROCESS WERE VERY IMPRESSIVE. OBSERVERS TALKED WITH CANDIDATES' REPRESENTATIVES (OF THIEU, HA THUC KY, AND SUU TICKETS), ALL OF WHOM REPORTED NO IRREGULARITIES HAD OCCURRED. (ONE REPRESENTATIVE REPLIED CROWDED CONDITIONS IN POLLS HAD MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANYONE TO ATTEMPT INFLUENCE VOTERS.) OBSERVERS ALSO IMPRESSED WHEN ACCOMPANYING VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST DENIED BALLOT BECAUSE ABSENTEE VOTING AUTHORIZATION NOT PROPERLY VALIDATED BY HOME PRECINCT.

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 4819 S E C R E T

3. OBSERVERS IN HUE FOUND MOST POLLING LOCATIONS UNCROWDED BECAUSE VOTERS HAD APPEARED IN GREATEST NUMBER DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS. OBSERVERS TIMED VOTERS, WHO AVERAGED THREE AND ONE-HALF MINUTES IN COMPLETE PASSAGE THROUGH POLLS.

4. ARRANGEMENTS MADE BY THUA THIEN PROVINCE CHIEF LT. COL. KHOA WERE EXCELLENT, AFFORDING OBSERVERS AND APPROXIMATELY 75 PRESS REPRESENTATIVES FULLY UNHINDERED OPPORTUNITY TO EXAME VOTING LOCATIONS AND TALK WITH ANY VOTER OR OFFICIAL AT WILL. KHOA EXCUSED HIMSELF AT ONE MILITARY VOTING LOCATION TO FALL IN LINE BEHIND FIRST DIVISON TROOPS AND MODESTLY CAST OWN BALLOT, WHICH ALSO SEEMED IMPRESS OBSERVERS.

5. OBSERVERS TOOK BREAK FROM 98 DEGREE HEAT AT LUNCHEON FOR ALL FOREIGN OBSERVERS AND PRESS, HOSTED BY I CORPS COMMANDER, GENERAL LAM. DURING DAY REPORTS OF NEARBY ENEMY ACTIVITY DIRECTED AGAINST VOTING PROVIDED REMAINDER OF WARTIME SITUATION.

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 4819 S E C R E T

6. SENATOR MURPHY AND GOVERNOR GUY VISITED SEVEN OR EIGHT POLLING PLACES IN AND AROUND TUY HOA, CAPITAL OF

SECRET

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Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 04819 031640Z

PHU YEN PROVINCE, INCLUDING ONE AT HIEN XUONG DISTRICT WHERE EXPLOSION SEVERAL HOURS EARLIER HAD KILLED THREE AND WOUNDED APPROXIMATELY 40. BOTH OBSERVERS WERE CLEARLY IMPRESSED WITH FOOLPROOF MECHANICS AGAINST FRAUD; SENATOR MURPHY POINTED OUT THAT THERE ARE FEW SUCH SAFEGUARDS IN THE U.S. GOVERNOR GUY ADDED (IN JOINT INTERVIEW FILMED FOR LOCAL NORTH DAKOTA TELEVISION) THAT HE STRUCK BY SIGHT OF CIVILIAN ELECTION OFFICIAL REFUSING TO LET SOLDIERS VOTE BECAUSE THEIR REGISTRATION LIST HAD NOT ARRIVED AT POLLING STATION. VISIT TO HIEN XUONG, WHERE THEY EXAMINED EXPLOSION DAMAGE, SAW BLOODSTAINS ON SCHOOLHOUSE STEPS AND LEARNED THAT SOME OF WOUNDED HAD RETURNED TO VOTE, HEIGHTENED FAVORABLE REACTIONS.

7. ELECTION EXPERTS SCAMMON, HERZ ERG AND PENNIMAN APPEARED ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE WHICH THEY DESCRIBED AS IMPRSSIVE AND MOVING. THEY VISITED LARGE NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS IN THREE AREAS AND

PAGE 5 RUMJIR 4819 S E C R E T
APPARENTLY FOUND LITTLE WHICH THEY COULD CRITICIZE AND MUCH TO PRAISE.

8. WE DO NOT YET HAVE DETAILED REACTIONS FROM OTHER GROUP BUT WILL REPORT FURTHER AS WE LEARN THEM.

9. ENTIRE GROUP SCHEDULED FOR MACV AND CORDS BRIEFING TOMMORROW (SEPTEMBER 4) MORNING, FOLLOWED BY ELECTION ROUNDUP BRIEFING IN THE AFTERNOON PRIOR THEIR DEPARTURE NOW SCHEDULED FOR 1800.

GP-1. BUNKER

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